

# North Carolina Minority Health Facts: American Indians



State Center for Health Statistics and Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

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The purpose of this report is to present basic health facts about American Indians in North Carolina in the areas of mortality, chronic diseases, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, health risk factors, access to health care, quality of life, maternal and infant health, and child and adolescent health. But first we give some background information on the American Indian population in the state.

## Age and Geographic Characteristics of American Indians in North Carolina

North Carolina has the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi River and the sixth largest American Indian population in the nation, according to 2008 U.S. Census Bureau population estimates. According to the census, there were 108,279 American Indian/Alaskan Native residents of North Carolina in 2008. Although the percentage of North Carolina's population that is American Indian has not changed since 1990, the number has increased by nearly 40 percent since 1990 and by 9 percent since 2000. American Indians now represent a little more than 1 percent of the total population of the state.<sup>1</sup>

American Indians in North Carolina are younger than the majority white population. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, the median age of the state's American Indian population was 33.8 years, compared to 40.5 years for the white population of North Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

Although American Indians live in each of North Carolina's 100 counties (see 2008 data on the map, Figure 1), three-fourths of the population lives

in 12 counties, five of which are clustered in the southeastern part of the state. Forty-five percent of North Carolina's American Indian population lives in Robeson County (mostly Lumbee), accounting for 38 percent of that county's total population. Seven percent of North Carolina's American Indians live in Jackson and Swain counties (mostly Cherokee), accounting for nearly 15 percent of the total population in these counties.<sup>1</sup>

Among the American Indian tribes in North Carolina are eight state-recognized tribes: the Eastern Band of Cherokee (who live primarily in Swain, Jackson, and Graham counties), Coharie Tribe (Harnett, Sampson), Haliwa Saponi Indian Tribe (Halifax, Warren, Nash), Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina (Robeson, Scotland, Hoke), Meherrin Indian Tribe (Hertford, Bertie, Gates, Northampton), Occaneechi Band of Saponi Nation (Orange, Alamance), Sappony (Person), and Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe (Columbus, Bladen). The Eastern Band of Cherokee is a federally-recognized tribe, and the only tribe served by the Indian Health Service of the United States Public Health Service. These tribes are referenced in Chapter 71 A of the North Carolina General Statutes. The state-recognized tribes hold membership on the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs. The American Indian tribes in Cumberland, Guilford, Johnston, Mecklenburg, and Wake counties are represented through the following associations or organizations: Cumberland County Association for Indian People, Guilford Native American Association, Metrolina Native American Association, and the Triangle Native American Society. In 1956, the United States Congress passed